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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 06 KABUL 000021

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT REJECTS MOST OF KARZAI'S CABINET
NOMINEES

REF: A. KABUL 4139
[1](#)B. KABUL 4137

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for Reasons 1.4 b,d

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: On January 2, the Afghan Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) voted to accept seven of President Karzai's 24 Cabinet nominees and to reject 17 others. Two nominees were not voted on as their ministries are newly proposed by the President and not yet approved by Parliament. Karzai will likely appoint many current ministers and deputies as Acting Ministers during Parliament's upcoming recess. Rumors abound about the vote outcomes and motives seem to have ranged from venal to lofty. Several sources, including two ministers who were voted down, say some MPs were soliciting cash for their votes. Public reaction in Kabul is cautiously positive. End Summary.

Parliament Votes

[1](#)2. (U) In an all-day session on January 2, the Wolesi Jirga voted to approve seven of President Karzai's Cabinet nominees and to reject 17 out of the total 24. Some Ministers, like Ismail Khan for Water and Energy, narrowly failed to gain the required 117 votes, while others received only 30-40 votes. There are a total of 249 parliamentarians in the Wolesi Jirga, of whom 232 were present.

[1](#)3. (C) Those approved included the Ministers of Defense, Interior Affairs, Finance, Education, Mines, Agriculture, and Culture and Youth Affairs. Those rejected include the Ministers of Economy, Justice, Higher Education, Hajj and Religious Affairs, Water and Energy, Transportation and Aviation, Commerce, Public Welfare, Public Health, Communication, Women's Affairs, Labor and Social Affairs, Border and Tribal Affairs, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Anti-Narcotics, Refugees, and Urban Development. Vote tallies and short biographic notes are in para 15.

[1](#)4. (C) Two other Ministries were created by Karzai but have not been approved yet by Parliament: Literacy, and Martyrs and Disabled. Karzai forwarded nominees for these ministerial posts but Parliament refuses to consider them until it decides on the issue of establishing the ministries themselves. Karzai did not nominate a Minister of Foreign Affairs. Four more positions that require confirmation but have not yet been submitted are the head of the intelligence service, the head of the Central Bank, the head of the Red Crescent Society and the Attorney General.

Legal Way Forward

[1](#)5. (C) Based on current law, there is nothing either to prevent or compel Karzai to offer new cabinet nominations before Parliament recesses on January 5. If he is prepared to put forward another slate of candidates, he could either call for an extraordinary session of Parliament to hold another round of confirmation hearings, or appoint by

Presidential decree under Article 79 of the Constitution caretaker ministers who would be subject to confirmation when Parliament reconvenes in February. Alternatively, he could postpone nominating new ministers until after the January 28 London Conference and decree all sitting Ministers who were rejected to be "acting" - as he did previously with Foreign Minister Spanta - and likewise designate as "acting" the Deputy Ministers of those ministries for which new minister candidates failed. Palace sources and one current minister told us that Karzai would probably implement this last scenario. He may announce this at his full Cabinet meeting January 4, according to this minister.

Reactions and Rumors

¶6. (U) Early on January 2, the head of the President's Office of Administrative Affairs told us the government hoped to have at least 15 ministers approved. Presidential spokesman Waheed Omer said January 3 that the result of the parliament was totally unexpected by the President. He said that even though the results created an 'unpleasant situation' for the President, Karzai would respect the Parliament's vote. He added that democracy is a new phenomenon in the country and the Afghan government must respect the values of democracy and the Afghan Constitution. "This is the beauty of democracy. We are exercising democracy," said the spokesman. According to some sources the President was extremely angered late January 2 but by the morning of January 3 he was philosophical with a visiting CODEL, calling the vote a "step forward to democracy" and noting that "allies voted against me because I wouldn't nominate their friends" or because

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ministers had not visited them to lobby. He has other names to fill the open slots for the next nominees, according to the Palace.

¶7. (C) Some MPs and others speculated that this first slate of nominees was really a trial balloon or "sacrifice list" and that Karzai's true intention was to postpone sending his final list until after the London conference. This line of speculation posits the first Cabinet slate as Karzai's way fulfilling campaign promises without giving up key political capital which, contrary to public appearances, could prove to be a win-win for Karzai. Karzai can use the London Conference to get a raft of new appointees that donors fully approve of and then submit these to Parliament as his real Cabinet nominees with a much stronger presentation and personal endorsement than was received by the "first draft" Cabinet picks.

¶8. (C) Deputy Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga and former Presidential candidate Mirwais Yasini (Pashtun, Nangarhar), who harbors a grudge against Karzai for theft of Yasini's small Pashtun voter base in the 2009 Presidential election, told us on January 3 that the rejection of the 17 ministers was "the results of days and nights of work" and that he and other like-minded MP's had campaigned behind the scenes to encourage a rejection of cabinet nominees who were unqualified, and an acceptance of "technical people." In particular, Yasini said, they had worked to keep those who were nominated on the basis of the "President's deals" with power-brokers and warlords from gaining access to the "money ministries" such as Transportation and Commerce. Meanwhile, successful and unsuccessful ministers alike allege to the Embassy that they vote-buying or the request for specific personal favors was rampant by MP's.

¶9. (S) Health Minister Sayed Fatimie told Ambassador Wayne by phone that for the last two weeks he has been fighting outright "cash for confirmation vote" demands from MPs. Expressing shock at the blatancy of these extortion attempts, Fatimie said MPs had offered their own votes and the votes of others they could purportedly deliver for \$1000 apiece. He said he refused all such demands and pleaded with the MPs to

recognize how detrimental to the country their behavior was. He further claimed that all 102 members who voted for him had told him personally they would vote to confirm him because of his record. Shaken and upset, Fatimie told the Ambassador, "I did not want to be considered a corrupt man and that is the only way I could be confirmed...I would not surrender to this dirty, dirty situation." Fatimie did not want to provide the names of the MPs over the phone, but we expect he will do so in personal meetings in the near future. The current Minister of Counternarcotics similarly told Wayne he had been approached by five or six groups of deputies asking for money. He said he told them he had none to offer.

¶10. (C) Echoing the theme of whether Karzai's support had been real, MP Mahmood Gailani (Pashtun, Ghazni), nephew of Hamed Gailani, rejected as Minister of Border and Tribal Affairs, told us January 3 that there had been "mixed signals" from the Palace and weak support, citing Karzai telling MP,s in late December who complained about the cabinet list that "it,s your choice", and that the President's point man, Farouk Wardak, newly approved Minister of Education, had campaigned actively for himself but neglected others. Gailani said that Karzai now faced some "very annoyed" warlords and power-brokers such as Dostum, Pir Gailani, Mojaddedi and Mohaqeq, whose candidates were unsuccessful.

¶11. (C) Regarding the rejections, Gailani alleged (without offering proof) that the Hizbe-Islami party had decided, as a bloc of about 25 votes, to vote against all/all the ministers (except Farouk Wardak (Education) an ex-party member) simply because their party's one ministerial candidate, for Martyrs and Disabled Affairs, had to wait for a ministry to be legally created before he could be sent for confirmation. Gailani said that his uncle had gotten a low vote because, when asked during the confirmation hearings how he could justify three members of the Gailani family getting cabinet-level posts, he had gotten angry and said "so don't vote for me!"

¶12. (C) Former Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah crowed to the media that this turn of events was a sign of the decay of Karzai's power and the situation in Afghanistan. Additionally, on January 2, Junbesh Party leader Dostum released a statement saying the Junbesh Party had supported three of the candidates who failed to be confirmed. Their failure to obtain confirmation was not what the Junbesh Party expected from their negotiations, nor what they expected from their political partners. The statement said further that the party would discuss the issue in an urgent meeting and

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warned that "those who believe in tactics more than solidarity and political partnership will face the consequences."

¶13. (C) Some Embassy contacts mentioned being pleased with the fact that Parliament had appeared not to fall in line with Karzai. Others said that Parliament wanted to "teach President Karzai a lesson." Rumors swirl about the amounts spent by the approved Ministers on payments to Parliamentarians for their votes. A persistent canard of some MPs holds that the USG provided money to our chosen Ministerial nominees to make such payments to Parliament.

Comment

¶14. (C) The Parliament's display of strength on January 2 no doubt reflected a variety of motives. In Cabinet approval votes in years past, some MPs took pictures of their ballots with mobile phones, presumably to show their sponsors that they met their end of the bargain. This practice was banned this time, giving MPs an additional measure of independence, and party and faction lines appear to have been freely crossed. The talk of vote-buying and retribution against

those who wouldn't pay is persistent and credible, but there also was a refreshing rejection of underwhelming candidates who were nominated based on connections to the warlords who have long dominated Afghanistan's political scene.

Short Bios And Vote Tallies

15. (U) Approved

Ministry of National Defense

H.E. General Abdul Rahim Wardak

Pashtun from Wardak, military academy in Kabul and US, Deputy Minister of Defense since 2002 and Minister of Defense since 2004; used to be in Mahaz-e Melli (Pir Gailani), faced difficult questions on the business activities of his son Hamed Wardak.

Yea: 124

Nay: 100

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 7

(U) Approved

Ministry of Interior Affairs

H.E. Mohamad Hanif Atmar

Pashtun from Laghman, Masters from York University, NGO background (NCA), was Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Minister of Education before becoming Minister of Interior in 2008; former Khalqi (worked for Khad, the intelligence service under the communist regime).

Yea: 147

Nay: 77

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 5

(U) Approved

Ministry of Finance

H.E. M. Omar Zakhilwal

Pashtun from Nangarhar, educated in Canada (Doctorate), was Director of the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) and Acting Minister of Transport, before becoming Minister of Finance in 2008; likely to face issue of dual citizenship, said to be close to Afghan Mellat.

Yea: 141

Nay: 84

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 6

(U) Approved

Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs

H.E. Sayed Makhdum Amin Rahin

Tajik from Kabul, Master's and Doctorate Literature from Tehran University, served on the Constitutional Commission under Adour Khan, various cultural posts in Pakistan and the US, active in the Rome group, Minister of Culture from 2002-2005, failed to receive the vote of confidence in the 2005 Cabinet, currently Ambassador to India; close to the king's family.

Yea: 120

Nay: 93

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 18

(U) Approved

Ministry of Education

H.E. Farog Wardak

Pashtun from Wardak, studied Pharmacy and Management in Pakistan, worked with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (1986-1996), and UNDP (1996-2002), head of the Constitutional Commission Secretariat, head of the JEMB Secretariat (2004 elections), head of the Secretariat of the Ministers' Council and Head of the Office of Administrative Affairs, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs,

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Head of the Peace Jirga Secretariat, and finally Minister of Education since 2008; Hezb-e Islami.

Yea: 155

Nay: 73

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 3

(U) Approved
Ministry of Agriculture
H.E. Muhamad Asif Rahimi
Tajik, from Paghman, studied Public Management in Nebraska,
NGO background (CARE), Director of NSP from 2004 and 2006,
Deputy Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
from 2006 to 2008, and Minister of Agriculture since 2008.
Yea: 136
Nay: 89
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 14

(U) Approved
Ministry of Mines
H.E. Wahid u Allah Sharani
Uzbek from Badakhshan, s/o Niamatullah Shahrani, former
minister of Haj, educated in Pakistan and the UK, university
lecturer in the UK, after return in 2004 respectively
Presidential Advisor on Economic Affairs, Deputy Head of
the Bank, and Deputy Minister of Finance. Became Minister
of Finance in 2008.
Yea: 140
Nay: 78
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 14

(U) Rejected
Ministry of Economy
H.E. Dr. Ahadi
Pashtun from Sorobi Kabul, studied in Kabul, Beirut
(American University) and Chicago, university lecturer in
the US. Head of the Kabul Central Bank from 2002 to 2004,
Minister of Finance from 2004 to 2008 (when he declared -
and later retracted - his intention to run for the
Presidency); former Head of Afghan Mellat.
Yea: 91
Nay: 130
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 10

(U) Rejected
Ministry of Justice
H.E. Sarwar Danish
Hazara from Daikondi, studied Law and Islamic Education in
Qom, member of the Constitutional Commission, first
Governor of Daikondi, Minister of Justice since 2004;
Hezb-e Wahdat (Khalili).
Yea: 96
Nay: 122
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 13

(U) Rejected
Ministry of Higher Education
H.E. Dr. Obedu allah Obed
Tajik from Kabul, was Presidential Advisor on Social
Affairs and Chancellor of the Medical University; facing
questions on his own higher education and the fact that he
gave three different dates of birth; neo-conservative.
Yea: 94
Nay: 121
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 6

(U) Rejected
Ministry of Commerce
H.E. Ghulam Muhamd Eelaq
Hazara from Balkh, lecturer at the Kabul University from
1867-1978, Deputy Head of the Export Bank and Deputy
Ministry of Commerce under the communist regime until
1989. No official positions until 2006 (although he held
unofficial government positions in Mazar-e Sharif).
Currently Acting Director of the Chamber of Commerce and
advisor to the Minister of Commerce; introduced by Mohaqeq.
Yea: 78
Nay: 138
Abstain/blank/spoiled: 5

(U) Rejected
Ministry of Water and Energy
H.E. Mohammad Ismail Khan
Tajik from Shindad Herat, studied military academy in
Kabul, was army commander of the southwest until joining

the uprising against the communist government, Herat Governor (or actually Amir of the Southwest) under the mujahedin and Karzai government, Ministry of Water and Energy since 2004; Jamiat-e Islami.

Yea: 111

Nay: 109

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 10

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(U) Rejected

Ministry of Transport and Aviation

H.E. Dr. Mohammadollah Batash

Uzbek from Kunduz, studied in Russia, was Dean of the Journalism Faculty in the 80s, Advisor to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs from 2005-2008, Advisor to IDLG since 2008, member of the Special Advisory Board on Senior Appointments, Secretary of the Jombesh General Council from 2003-2005.

Yea: 82

Nay: 138

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 12

Rejected

Ministry of Women's Affairs

H.E. Mrs. Hosn Bano Ghazanfar

Uzbek from Balkh, studied literature in Kabul and Russia, worked in the Kabul University since the 80's, Dean of the Literature Faculty since 2003, Minister of Women's Affairs since 2005; brother owns Ghazanfar Bank.

Yea: 115

Nay: 108

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 9

Rejected

Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs

H.E. Enayatollah Baligh

Tajik, from Kapisa, held several government and judicial positions under all regimes (including deputy of the Vice and Virtue Department under the Taliban), most recently lecturer of Sharia Law at Kabul University; senior member of Ettihad-e Islami (Sayyaf).

Yea: 108

Nay: 115

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 4

Rejected

Ministry of Public Welfare

H.E. Huseen Abdul Elahi

Hazara from Ghazni, engineering faculty, Masters from Manila and (online) Doctorate from Atlanta University, worked in the private sector in Iran, was advisor to the Minister of Planning, had several positions in the Ministry of Education, and was most recently Director of Civil Service Reform in the Civil Service Commission; Hezb-e Wahdat (Mohaqeq).

Yea: 33

Nay: 179

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 19

Rejected

Ministry of Public Health

H.E. Dr. Sayed Mohammad Amin Fatimie

Pashtun from Nangarhar, graduated from Nangarhar Medical Faculty, additional studies in Germany and US, Minister of Public Health in the mujahedin administration and in the current administration since 2004; affiliated with Nejat-e Melli (Mojadedi).

Yea: 102

Nay: 120

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 8

Rejected

Ministry of Communication

H.E. Eng. Amirzai Sangin

Pashtun from Paktika, studied in the UK and lived and

worked in Sweden, mainly in the field of telecommunication, returned in 2002 and worked as Ministerial Advisor, Director of GSM licensing, CEO of Afghan Telecom, and Minister of Telecommunication since December 2004 (when he only just received the vote of confidence in the midst of confusion over what constituted a simple majority).

Yea: 92

Nay: 130

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 9

Rejected

Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

H.E. Waes Barmak

Tajik from Panjshir, NGO background (ACBAR), Kabul

Engineering Faculty and Masters from London SOAS (2004),

currently Deputy Minister of MRRD; said to be introduced by Fahim.

Yea: 90

Nay: 127

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 13

Rejected

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

H.E. Esmael Monshi

Turkman from Jowzjan, graduated from the Literature Faculty in 1985 after which he engaged in literacy courses all over

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the country, left in 1989 and spent time in Pakistan and Turkmenistan, returned in 2002, member of the Executive Board of Jombesh-e Melli, Deputy Head of Jombesh since 2007.

Yea: 29

Nay: 176

Rejected

Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs

H.E. Seayd Hamid Gailani

Pashtun from Paktika, studied in Cairo, Iran and Pakistan, s/o Pir Seyyed Gailani leader of Mahaz-e Melli, currently Deputy Speaker of the Meshrani Jirga, deputy of Mahaz-e Melli.

Yea: 70

Nay: 149

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 13

Rejected

Ministry of Anti-Narcotics

H.E. Gen Khodad

Hazara from Daikondi, studied at the Military Academy in Kabul, India and Russia; army officer under the communist regime, Deputy Minister of Counter-Narcotics since 2005 and Minister since 2007; Khalq background, supported by Khalili.

Yea: 36

Nay: 176

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 20

Rejected

Ministry of Refugees

H.E. Enayatollah Nazari

Tajik from Parwa, studied Political Science and Law in Kabul, worked for the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Office under both the communist and mujahedin regime, was Minister of Refugees during the interim Administration, said to be reintroduced by Fahim.

Yea: 92

Nay: 133

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 19

Rejected

Ministry of Urban Development

H.E. Engineer Yousef Pashtun

Pashtun from Kandahar, has been Minister of Urban Reconstruction since 2004, he was reintroduced again in 2005, but - like Sangeen - only just received the vote of

confidence in the midst of confusion over what constituted a simple majority.

Yea: 88

Nay: 127

Abstain/blank/spoiled: 16

Minister of Literacy (New Ministry, not yet approved by Parliament)

H.E. Wazhma Zurmati

Pashtun from Paktia. The Parliament will discuss whether they approve of the establishment of the new Ministry of Literacy before voting on her candidacy. New established Ministry, structure is not approved by Parliament yet.

Minister of Martyrs and Disabled (new ministry, not yet approved by Parliament)

H.E. Taj Ali Saber

Pashtun from Khost, studied Political Science in Nangarhar, lecturer at Khost University, was until recently a member of the Khost provincial council.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

No nominee yet.

Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs

Eliminated by Karzai.

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